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ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken to see if agreement existed among speech teachers as to the behavioral objectives necessary for an "A," "B," or "C" level grade on a classroom speech. In a questionnaire, 328 undergraduate speech instructors rated as A, B, or C a list of 14 behavioral objectives constructed by rewriting the speech grading standards employed at Pennsylvania State University according to criteria established by Robert Mager. Results indicated that the speech teachers tended to characterize B and A level speeches as successful if they achieved their avowed purpose of having some impact on the audience while C level speeches satisfied only minimum concrete and mechanical requirements. (A list of the 14 behavioral objectives and the responses to them are presented in table form.) (JM)

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BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES FOR THE GRADING OF CLASSROOM SPEECHES

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BAKER[1] has pointed out that, except for incidental remarks,[2] little material on speech behavioral objectives has been published. Kibler[3] has stressed the importance of clear behavioral objectives to both the teacher and the student of speech. Since the rating of grading of speeches seems to vary greatly among raters using typical rating scales,[4] the present study was undertaken to see what agreement, if any, exists among speech teachers regarding what behaviors the student must perform in order to obtain a specific classroom grade on his speech.

Procedure. The behavioral objectives used in the present study were basically those speech grading standards employed at the Pennsylvania State University and published by Oliver.[5] These standards were rewritten to conform more closely (although not exactly) to the concept of behavioral objectives as defined by Mager[6] and Kibler.[7] The extent to which they were rewritten can be observed by comparing the behavioral objectives in Table I with Oliver's *standards*.[8]

These objectives were randomly ordered, structured into a questionnaire, and mimeographed. Table I duplicates the order in which the objectives were listed and demonstrates the overall format of the one-page questionnaire; the actual questionnaire of course had blank spaces to check underneath the letter grades instead of the numbers and percentages appearing in Table I.

The questionnaires were mailed in the Spring of 1967 to the 651 persons listed in the 1966-67 *Directory* of the *Speech Association of America* as members of the Undergraduate Speech Instruction Interest Group. An accompanying cover letter asked each person to check whether he required each objective for a C, B, or A speech. The letter explained that any objective checked as required for a C speech would be considered as also required for a B and an A speech, and that any checked as required for a B speech would also be considered as required for an A speech. Instructions also specified that an objective not required at all should be left unchecked. Each respondent was encouraged to write on the reverse side any objectives which he required, but which were not on the list. A self- addressed,

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1 Eldon E. Baker, "Aligning Speech Evaluation and Behavioral Objectives," *Speech Teacher*, XVI (March 1967), 158-160.

2 Theodore Clevenger, Jr., "Some Factors Involved in Classroom Procedures for the Acquisition of Verbal Concepts," *Speech Teacher*, XV (March 1966), 113-118.

3 Robert J. Kibler, "Developing Behavioral Objectives for Undergraduate Speech Instruction," paper presented at the 1963 SAA convention, Denver, Colorado.

4 For instance, see Wayne N. Thompson, "An Experimental Study of the Accuracy of Typical Speech Rating Techniques," *Speech Monographs*, XI (1944), 65-79.

5 Robert T. Oliver, "The Eternal (and Infernal) Problem of Grades," *Speech Teacher*, IX (January 1960), 8-11.

6 Robert F. Mager, *Preparing Instructional Objectives* (San Francisco: Fearon Publishers, Inc., 1962), p. 12.

7 *Op. cit.*

8 Oliver, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-10.

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TABLE I

RESPONDENTS REQUIRING "BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES" FOR DIFFERENT GRADES ON CLASSROOM SPEECHES (N = 328)

Behavioral Objective	Required For Grade Of: C No. (percent)	B No. (percent)	A No. (percent)
1. The speech style was distinguished by elements of vividness, such as analogies or comparisons, metaphor, specific instances, humor, concreteness, etc.	19(5.8)	177(54)	125(38.1)
2. The speech had a clear purpose in terms of auditor response sought, supported by main heads easy to identify (One respondent required item for a D).	227(69.2)	87(26.5)	9(2.7)
3. The speaker demonstrated reasonable directness and communicativeness in delivery.	287(87.5)	36(11)	3(.9)
4. The speaker did not detract from his message through gross errors of grammar, pronunciation, or articulation.	278(84.8)	37(11.3)	7(2.1)
5. The speaker made a genuinely individual contribution to the thinking of his audience.	17(5.2)	126(38.4)	170(51.8)
6. The speech was intellectually sound in developing a topic of real worth, using adequate and dependable evidence.	73(22.3)	221(67.4)	33(10.1)
7. The speech conformed reasonably to the assigned time limit (Two respondents required item for a D).	294(89.6)	17(5.2)	6(1.8)
8. The speaker made understandable an unusually difficult concept or process; OR he won *some* agreement from an audience initially inclined to disagree with him; OR he won *some* tendency to act from an audience initially inclined to not so act.	16(4.9)	136(41.5)	161(49.1)
9. The speaker achieved a variety and flexibility of mood and manner suited to the multiple differentiation of thinking and feeling demanded by the subject matter and by the speaker-audience relations.	19(5.8)	130(39.6)	159(48.5)
10. The speech was of the type assigned (to inform, to convince, to actuate, etc.) (Two respondents required item for a D).	313(95.4)	8(2.4)	5(1.5)
11. The speaker moved the audience progressively from initial uncertainty (of knowledge, belief, or tendency to act) toward the accepetance of the speaker's purpose, by orderly processes, toward a final resolution of the uncertainty in a conclusion that evolved naturally from the materials used by the speaker.	18(5.5)	138(42.1)	158(48.2)
12. The speech was better than most classroom speeches in *stimulative quality,* that is, in challenging the audience to think, or in arousing depth of response.	5(1.5)	230(70.1)	88(26.8)
13. The speaker established rapport of a high order with apt style and direct, extemporaneous delivery, achieving a genuinely communicative *circular response.*	10(3.0)	96(29.3)	212(64.6)
14. The speech was presented on the date for which it was assigned (Five respondents required item for a D).	286(87.2)	14(4.3)	5(1.5)

stamped return envelope accompanied each questionnaire.

Results. Twenty-three questionnaires were returned as undeliverable, reducing the net number sent out to 628. By June 9, 1967, 336 had been returned; of these, 8 were completed improperly or not at all, and so were unusable. Thus the study yielded a net total return of 328 or 52.3% of the net total mailed. This re-

turn was considered sufficient for the purposes of the study; consequently no follow-up letter was sent out.

Table I lists each objective as it appeared in the questionnaire and the total number and percentage of the 328 respondents checking each objective as required for each grade. For any one objective the percentages may not total 100%, since it may have been one which not everyone considered an objective for any grade.

Although 67 returns contained free responses which could be considered grading objectives, no clear or generalized pattern emerged to indicate that the list of objectives was not comprehensive. Some of these responses were unique. Other written objectives were thought to be included in or subsumed under one or more objectives listed in the questionnaire.

The data indicate considerable agreement among respondents on what objectives set the C speech apart from B and A speeches. The C objectives pretty well specify minimum mechanical requirements of speaking assignments, rather concrete requirements on which considerable agreement as to definition is possible. On the other hand, the B and A objectives generally specify or infer, using verbal concepts for which universal definitions are lacking, that the speech must have some impact upon the audience. That is, a C speech has a "clear purpose," conforms "reasonably to the assigned time limit," etc., objectives whose attainment can be readily agreed upon; but the B or A speech must be "stimulative," should "establish high rapport," "move the audience . . . toward the acceptance of the speaker's purpose," "win some agreement . . . or (win) some tendency to act," etc.

This study does little to show clear-cut distinctions between the A and B speeches, at least partly because true behavioral objectives, as defined by Mager, would be too specific to be used in such a mail survey. For instance, Mager says that an instructional objective should describe "what the learner will be *Doing* when demonstrating his achievement and how you will know when he is doing it," as well as "conditions under which the behavior is to occur."[9] Mager's definition would fit the following sample objective, which contrasts sharply in its specificity with the second clause in Objective 8 on the list:

> The student will deliver a 4- to 6-minute speech to convince his audience that the policy of ——— should not be adopted, his success to be confirmed by a statistically significant mean shift (*t*-test) in audience attitude toward the policy of ——— as measured by pre- and post-speech administration of a semantic differential attitude measure.

This kind of objective is clear, specific, and within Mager's definition, but is hardly practical enough to employ regularly in the classroom.

The one general conclusion which the writer feels justified in drawing from these data is that speech teachers tend to differentiate C speeches from B and A speeches on the basis that B and A speeches are considered successful in achieving their avowed purposes whereas C speeches are not. Such differentiation seems further justified on the basis of previous research, which found that B-and-better speeches actually produced statistically dependable mean shifts in attitude whereas C-and-lower speeches did not. The implication seems clear for both speech pedagogy and the professional training of speech teachers: speech teachers need a thorough grounding in both rhetorical theory and in experimental studies of what factors make a speech effective in eliciting desired audience response.

[9] Mager, *op. cit.*, p. 53.